

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS' INCLUSION POLICY FOR OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

Nature of DHSP Programs

DHSP Out-of-School Time Programs ("OST Programs") are designed to provide a comfortable, safe and stimulating environment to effectively meet the needs of children and youth during the OST Programs' hours.

The activities vary depending on the program; however, all activities are conducted within group settings and are designed to support the academic, social and developmental needs of participants by promoting creative expression, exploratory learning and positive adult and peer relationships. The staff/participant ratio varies, depending on the program setting.

The OST Programs provide participants with the opportunity to participate in a wide choice of planned, age appropriate activities, including outdoor and gym activities, field trips, games, project based activities, community service projects, enrichment classes and the pursuit of special interests. During the school year participants also work on homework.

All OST Program participants must meet the following basic eligibility requirements. Participants must have the ability and willingness to participate in group activities, they must be able to understand and follow program rules and conduct themselves safely and appropriately within a group setting. They must have the ability to successfully transition from one activity to another and in and out of the Program at the start and conclusion of each activity or day.

Inclusion Initiative

DHSP welcomes individuals with disabilities in all of its OST Programs and will provide reasonable accommodations when necessary to ensure that such individuals will have an equal opportunity to participate in the array of group activities offered to program participants. Individuals with disabilities currently participate in all OST Programs including community schools, youth centers, and childcare and recreation programs. All DHSP staff participates in an initial inclusion training as well as periodic targeted trainings offered throughout the year to insure that individuals with disabilities feel welcome. A full time DHSP Inclusion Specialist is available to support program staff, parents and program participants. The Department also maintains a contract with the Judge Baker Children's Center whose staff regularly provides DHSP staff with on site support, modeling, coaching and group trainings.

Reasonable Accommodations

DHSP will provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities who meet the basic eligibility requirements of the OST Programs or who with the provision of the reasonable accommodations will be able to meet the basic eligibility requirements, to facilitate equal participation for those individuals in existing OST Programs. Reasonable accommodations might include reasonable modifications to a program's rules, policies, or practices, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, alteration or removal of physical or transportation barriers. DHSP may not provide an accommodation that fundamentally alters the nature of the program.

DHSP may in some circumstances provide additional staffing up to and including a one-on-one aide to an individual with a disability who would not be able to participate in the program without such assistance, but who will be able to meet the basic eligibility requirements of the program to which he or she has applied if such assistance is provided. All such determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Individualized Assessments

If a question arises about whether an individual will be able to meet the OST Program's basic eligibility requirements, the DHSP Inclusion Advisory Team (IAT),¹ may conduct an individualized assessment. The purpose of the individualized assessment will be to determine what reasonable accommodations are needed to assist the individual, whether the accommodation can be provided without fundamentally altering the nature of the OST Program and whether the individual will be able to meet the basic eligibility requirements of the OST Program with the addition of a reasonable accommodation. As stated above, all OST Programs require the ability and willingness to participate in group activities, the ability to understand and follow program rules, and conduct oneself safely within a group setting and the ability to transition successfully from one activity to another and in and out of the program at the start and conclusion of each activity or day. The IAT may determine that the OST Program's rules, policies or practices should be modified or that the individual should be provided with auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats or the removal or alteration of physical barriers. The IAT may, in some circumstances, determine that additional staffing up to and including a one-on-one aide is needed. The provision of any such accommodation, including a one-on-one aide, must be based upon a determination that such an accommodation will enable the individual to meet the OST Program's basic eligibility requirements and participate in the Program's activities.

¹ The Inclusion Advisory Team, consisting of the DHSP division heads of the Childcare and Family Support Services, Youth Programs, Community Schools and Recreation Division, the Executive Director/ADA Coordinator of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, the DHSP Inclusion Specialist, staff from the Judge Baker Children's Center and Deputy Director Jackie Neel, will make all such individualized assessments.

If an individual is unable to meet the basic eligibility requirements of the OST Program and cannot participate in the Program's activities, even with reasonable accommodations, the individual cannot be accepted into the Program.

In conducting an individualized assessment, the Inclusion Specialist or his/her designee will utilize the following procedures:

- Contact the parent/guardian, explain the assessment process and obtain a signed Release of Information form;
- Request and review a copy of the individual's current IEP from the OSE;
- Review the IEP and summarize it for the Inclusion Advisory Team;
- Interview the parent or guardian to gain more knowledge of the individual (the Inclusion Specialist, the Division Head and any program staff requested by the family may be present at the interview);
- Observe the individual in their school day or summer camp setting;
- Speak with the individual's classroom teachers and other adults providing supports to the individual;
- Speak with the administration of the OSE regarding current supports being provided to the individual during the school day.

The Inclusion Specialist and other staff involved in the assessment process will share the results of the individual assessment with the full Inclusion Advisory Team. The IAT will determine if placement in a DHSP Program is appropriate and what supports will be needed. The parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the results of the assessment.

For additional information please contact Jackie Neel, Deputy Director or Nicole Horton Inclusion Specialist at 349-6200.